Frequently Asked Questions About Conducting Research and Evaluation

Mentoring professionals are well aware of the importance of being able to identify and report on program outcomes. Not only is this information helpful for internal planning and for making programmatic improvements, but it is also required by funding sources and is instrumental in developing community support and long-range sustainability. However, the actual task of designing and implementing a research-based program evaluation can be very daunting. Mentoring programs often lack both the time and expertise to design and carry out their own evaluation plan, and they are also limited in the amount of funding available for research activities.

Despite these difficulties, it is possible to conduct research activities that are relatively straightforward and that can truly help your program grow and improve. This training supplement is intended to encourage and support newcomers to evaluation. It answers commonly asked questions about researching and evaluating mentoring programs and explains common evaluation terminology. It also offers additional resources for you to investigate so that you can make informed decisions about conducting research on your program.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q *What's the connection between research and evaluation? Aren't they basically the same?*

The terms "research" and "evaluation" are often used interchangeably but in fact are quite different. Basically, *research* is the systematic process of gathering information in order to learn something. A research plan follows the scientific method of stating a hypothesis, collecting data, analyzing the data, and drawing conclusions. Research seeks to determine facts in order to identify patterns and draw conclusions based on the facts. While researchers may also make recommendations about how their findings might influence practice, their main objective is to shed light on a particular problem or theory.

Program evaluation is any process that gathers and analyzes information of various kinds in order to improve or enhance a program or practice. There are many different ways to conduct a program evaluation. It can be as simple as counting the number of people actually receiving a service and comparing this number to how many people you had planned to serve. It can be as complex as finding out whether participants in a program have changed their behaviors as a result of being in the program. An evaluator often uses research techniques and instruments to gather accurate information. But you don't need to be a researcher to evaluate your program.

Both research and evaluation activities start by clearly stating:

- What is to be studied and why
- What the study or information-gathering activity is intended to achieve
- How information will be gathered
- How the results will be used

Q *What is a logic model and what does it have to do with evaluation?*

The most basic logic model is a systematic picture of how you believe your program will work. It uses words and diagrams to describe the

sequence of activities that are intended to bring about change and how these activities are linked to the results the program is expected to achieve. When a logic model is used as a tool for planning programs and services, the result becomes the framework for program implementation, evaluation, and future planning.

A basic logic model looks like the following:

Need →	Resources/ Inputs →	Activities →	Outputs →	Intermediate outcomes (1–5 years →	Impact/long-term outcomes →
The problem(s) your program will address	Program ingredients, such as funds, staff, volunteers, partners, etc.	Specific activities and services the program will provide	Specific evidence of services provided (numbers)	Positive changes that will take place as a result of services	Lasting and significant results of your program over the long term

Be sure that your logic model is as specific as possible when it comes to the types of activities planned, evidence of services provided, and the outcomes you expect to achieve. A logic model that offers enough specific information can help drive the evaluation process because the items you need to evaluate—and their measures—are already identified. If your current logic model lacks specificity, is out of date, or does not reflect what you are actually doing, be sure to update it before starting the evaluation process. The resources section of this supplement includes tools for constructing a logic model, but the basic structure is simple—and logical! It requires only the patience to identify all the important pieces, put them in order, and be sure that your anticipated outcomes make sense for the activities you are providing.

Q *What types of evaluation do people usually conduct?*

The field of research has grown dramatically in recent years, and with that growth has come an explosion of theories, methodologies, systems, tools and instruments, and multi-level approaches that can intimidate anyone approaching evaluation for the first time. However, programs wishing to develop a simple evaluation plan, whether by hiring an outside evaluator or doing a self-evaluation, should focus their attention on the two primary types of program evaluation: *formative* and *summative*.

Formative evaluation collects data about programmatic issues, operations, and functions for the purpose of planning services and improving the way they are implemented. It may be conducted early on in the program planning process. For example, conducting a needs assessment to help determine what services to offer is a type of formative evaluation. Formative evaluation is often called *process evaluation* because it evaluates the manner in which programs and activities are being carried out, rather than the impacts that the program is having on participants. Process evaluation asks such questions as:

- How should our program deliver services to best address the problem or issue?
- Are the systems we have in place to deliver activities and services working and effective?
- Are the planned numbers being met? The intended populations being served?
- Are participants and other stakeholders satisfied with the way activities are delivered?

A process evaluation is useful in deciding whether to make programmatic changes during the course of the project in order to improve effectiveness and efficiency. Programs can use process evaluation to decide how to plan for budgetary changes by pointing out possible ways to save money or by identi-

fying systems or services that are not effective. A process evaluation can also yield useful information to share with a funding source or in a grant application to show that your program is effective in carrying out its planned activities. For example, you could evaluate how many potential volunteers actually become matched with a mentee. If the results show that you are doing a great job in that area, you can use that information to recruit more volunteers and demonstrate your efficiency to funders.

Summative evaluation is designed to gather conclusive data that indicate how effective the overall program is in achieving its outcomes, and thus is often called *outcome evaluation*. This kind of evaluation gets at the heart of a program's reason for existence: the effect that you are having on the participants you serve. Outcome evaluation helps programs determine if the activities being offered are actually having the impact intended. Outcome evaluation is less concerned with how many youth were served and more concerned with how the youth changed as a result of program involvement.

Outcome evaluation requires that you know enough about your participants before they enter services to be able to see if change really occurred as a result of the service. It also requires that you establish measurements that are clearly linked to the activities you have provided and outcomes you have identified. This is perhaps the most challenging part of an outcome evaluation and one that may require expert assistance in developing. Luckily, there are tools and instruments available that can help measure such seemingly intangible outcomes as "increased self-reliance" or "improved connectedness to family." The resource list at the end of this supplement provides information about where to find some of these evaluation tools.

Evaluators generally use one of the following strategies to measure outcomes in participants:

- *Pre- and post-test*, in which measurements are taken at two different points in time—before and after the intervention.
- *Post-test-only*, in which the measure is taken only once—after the intervention has occurred.
- *Experimental*, in which the group of people receiving services (*experimental group*) is compared with another group who is not receiving that service (*control group*). Participants are randomly assigned to the groups and both are measured, using the same instruments, before and after services are delivered.
- *Quasi-experimental*, in which the experimental group is compared to another group already in existence, such as a waiting list group. Both groups are measured, using the same instruments, before and after services are delivered.

The chart on the next page offers a brief summary of these different approaches, including their strengths and limitations. If you plan to set up an evaluation using either an experimental or quasi-experimental design, you will need the assistance of someone with research or evaluation experience to ensure your study is properly designed and implemented.

Outcome evaluation that shows how your program is making a positive difference provides important information for funding sources, community partners, local and state elected officials, potential and current volunteers, and your participants and their families. It also helps you learn where your limitations lie, where you can modify services to improve outcomes, and ultimately, whether the outcomes you have established are realistic given the services you are providing. It's important not to shy away from the less positive results of your evaluation. Remember that your purpose in conducting evaluation is not to prove that everything you are doing is right but to *improve* on what you are doing.

Q *What are the different kinds of data collected during an evaluation?*

Most research and evaluation activities collect two distinct kinds of data: *qualitative* and *quantitative*. Researchers use these two kinds of data for different purposes and they gather the data with different kinds of tools, but both are useful in both formative and summative evaluations.

Comparison of Evaluation Designs

Model	Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses
Pre- and post-test	Compares one group of individuals at two times: before and after an intervention	Easy to implement Needs only one group	Hard to show conclusively that the intervention caused the damage Does not meassure other possible reasons for change
Post-test only	Looks at one group *only* after the intervention has occurred	Only needs to have access to the group once Good for use with transient clients that may not be available for repeated measure	Does not measure change; allows few, if any, conclusions to be drawn about effectiveness of the intervention
Experimental Design	Looks at two groups whose members were randomly assigned One group receives intervention and one does not Measures both groups before and after intervention	Allows for control of differences between groups Can measure change and draw conclusions about the effectiveness of interventions	Random assignment is difficult to implement in social service settings May involve withholding potentially beneficialservices from one group Costly to track and measure both groups
Quasi-Experimental Design	Similar to experimental design, but uses an existing group for comparison rather than random assignment to two groups Measures both groups before and after the intervention	May be easier than experimental design to implement because groups are not assigned randomly Can measure change Allows for limited conclusions about the effectiveness of the intervention	Harder to control for differences between groups Harder to show conclusively that intervention caused the change rather than pre-existing difference between the groups) Costly to track and measure both groups

Quantitative data can be counted, measured, and reported in numerical form and can answer questions such as who, what, where, and how much. For example, a quantitative evaluation of your school-based mentoring program might use daily attendance records to note changes in attendance for mentored students. Other examples of quantitative data include test scores or grades, dropout rates, results of surveys or pre-post tests, number of participants in a program, incidences of negative behaviors, and so on. Quantitative data can be used in both process and outcome evaluations.

Some advantages of collecting quantitative data include the following:

- Data collection instruments can be used with large numbers of study participants

- Data collection instruments can be standardized, allowing for easy comparison within and across studies
- Data are easily compiled for analysis
- Findings can be presented succinctly
- Findings are more widely accepted as being scientific and applicable than those from qualitative evaluations

Qualitative data capture thoughts, feelings, and insights about programs not generally possible through a strictly quantitative approach. Examples of qualitative data include written descriptions of program activities, comments about how a program was or was not helpful, case studies, open-ended comments on surveys, and results from focus groups, interviews, and direct observations. Qualitative data are hard to summarize and analyze, but can bring to light significant findings that a quantitative approach might not. For example, a program that simply counts the number of male and female volunteers might show only that more males are needed in the program, but interviews with prospective male volunteers might find that male applicants feel uncomfortable with group orientation activities and therefore don't complete the application process.

Benefits of collecting qualitative data include the following:

- It helps develop understanding of how people feel about the program
- It may shed light on unanticipated outcomes
- Stakeholders, funders, policymakers, and the public may find quotes and anecdotes easier to understand and more appealing than statistical data
- It can generate new ideas about how to make the program work better

The ideal evaluation combines quantitative and qualitative methods. Such a mixed-method approach offers a range of perspectives on a program's processes and outcomes, allows you to look at the same issues in different ways, and promotes a greater understanding of the findings overall.

Q *What are the best methods of collecting data as we research our program?*

There are several common data collection methods and instruments that are frequently used by youth mentoring programs as part of both formative and summative evaluations:

- *Surveys and questionnaires*. These can be as simple as a participant satisfaction survey or as complex as a pre-post questionnaire designed to demonstrate the entire impact of a program. Generally, surveys are used to gather data and feedback on how program services are delivered, but they can also be used to gather qualitative information related to outcomes, such as feelings toward homework or relationships with teachers. Match-related surveys, like the one offered in *Measuring the Quality of Mentor Youth Relationships: A Tool for Mentoring Programs* (see the **Resources** section at the end of this training supplement), are also increasingly common. They can help pinpoint matches that may need additional support or identify larger issues with the strategies employed by a program's mentors.
- *Interviews and focus groups.* These can also be valuable sources of data, especially for qualitative data. The key to these methods is to design questions that are not leading or that needlessly restrict the answers they elicit. It is also important to select interviewees or focus group members who are representative of all participants. These techniques are generally used to gauge attitudes about participating in the program.
- *Direct observation.* This technique is not used frequently in mentoring programs as it can be difficult to give matches the privacy they need while closely observing them and because it can be difficult to interpret or categorize the actions one observes. But observation may be useful in analyzing program procedures, such as how

mentors react to training sessions or how easily they move through the screening and matching process.

- *Tracking raw numbers*. Sometimes the best research results come from the simplest comparison of numbers. Programs can find all kinds of evidence of success by comparing data about their participants to other groups. For example, a program may find that only three of its 100 student mentees dropped out of school in a particular year, while the district average was 12 out of every 100. That may not tell you why the mentees had a lower dropout rate, but it does hold meaning, especially when combined with other data that help explain the difference. (Note that in this case a comparison group has been identified of non-mentored students, thus using a quasi-experimental approach to measure outcomes.) Among the raw numbers that may be of interest to Office of Safe and Drug-Free (OSDFS) mentoring programs are:
  - Grades
  - Standardized test scores
  - Dropout rates
  - College attendance rates
  - Incidents of school discipline
  - Other statistics related to attendance or delinquent behavior.

  By becoming familiar with other available data—such as that collected by schools, districts, and other youth-serving agencies or government agencies—mentoring programs gain a powerful means of comparing their mentees to other similar youth groups.

The types of data collection instruments you use should be driven by the questions you want answered through your research. For example, direct observation might be useful if you wanted to know if mentored students participated more in classroom activities. But it's unlikely to tell you much about mentors' perceptions about how their matches are going.

When selecting data collection instruments, take into account how the data will be analyzed and used. Interviews and focus groups are unlikely to yield data that could be analyzed using advanced software, such as SPSS—they are more likely to simply gather a collection of specific quotes or illustrate general themes or opinions. However, a survey that gathered, say, match activity data and outcome-related data could be perfect for a software-driven analysis (which may show that activity X seems to result in outcome Y). Programs often use different methods to collect data about the same topic, such as conducting focus groups and administering a year-end survey to attitudes about program participation. Using multiple methods to examine the same research question builds reliability into the results.

Q There are so many factors to consider. How do I decide what kind of evaluation to conduct and what methods to use?

All OSDFS-funded mentoring programs are already conducting both process and outcome evaluations in order to meet the GPRA indicators established by the U.S. Department of Education for this grant program. For example, determining how many matches are sustained for 12 months is a kind of process evaluation, asking if the activities are being carried out according to plan. Measuring how many mentored students improve in core academic subjects as a result of their participation shows the impact mentoring has had on helping students improve, and ultimately whether the program will help these students achieve success in the future. These evaluation activities are valuable in helping program leaders make ongoing improvements to make sure their services are effective and outcomes are being achieved.

But many programs want to learn more about how well their program is doing. For example, a program that is primarily serving a particular segment of the eligible population—such as Hispanic youth or youth with learning disabilities—may want to develop an outcome evaluation to see if the activities provided are meeting the needs of this population. A program that is having significant difficulty attracting mentors may want to conduct a process

evaluation to find out how it can improve its outreach efforts. These additional evaluation activities need not be overwhelming and can yield valuable information for program improvement.

If you want to develop additional evaluation activities, don't worry about the specific type of evaluation or the methodology that you will use. Just start by determining what you want to know and why. It may help to ask the following questions:

- What is the purpose of the evaluation: what do you want to do with the results you obtain?
- What pressing issues are facing your program and how will an evaluation help inform your decision making?
- Who are the audiences, the people you want to inform about the results?
- What data do you want to gather in order to make informed decisions about your program?
- What sources do you want to use to collect data (staff, volunteers, participants, parents, schools, partner agencies, etc.)?
- Will you be able to gather the data from the sources you identify in a reasonable fashion and with sufficient success to be useful?
- How much time and other resources do you have to devote to this effort?

With any new evaluation effort, try to build on what you are already doing and draw on the information you are already collecting rather than having to start from scratch.

Once you know what you want to achieve with your evaluation, deciding what the focus of the effort will be, the methods and designs you will use to conduct the evaluation, and what tools you will use to collect data will be easier. You will probably also be clearer about whether you need to hire an outside evaluator or not, which will depend a lot on the scope and complexity of what you want to undertake. It is always a good idea to consult with someone with evaluation experience before moving forward, just to be sure you are on the right track.

Deciding what evaluation design to use will depend not only on what you want to measure and why but also on your available resources, time constraints, budgetary issues, and other programmatic and logistical issues. For example, even though you might get better results by establishing an evaluation design that uses a control group, you may lack access to such a group and would not be able to measure their outcomes due to lack of staff time. Refer again to the comparison chart of evaluation designs on page 4 to help decide what design you can reasonably put in place for your evaluation.

Q *What will it cost to research our program's effectiveness?*

With such a wide variety of data collection methods and instruments available, the cost of evaluating a program can vary widely. A good rule of thumb is that a thorough program evaluation will cost roughly ten percent of a program's operating budget. This amount of money will usually cover the costs of hiring an evaluator and conducting research at a level that is appropriate to the size of the program.

Obviously, researching your program can be more or less expensive than this depending on the types of data collected and the level of sophistication used in its analysis. There are many types of research, such as participant surveys and focus groups, which programs can conduct for little cost. These types of research strategies work well when a program simply wants to get feedback or identify areas for improvement. Research becomes more expensive when it attempts to answer the larger questions of "Is our program having an impact?" and "How is it having an impact?" These questions may require extensive data analysis and comparisons to other groups of youth and usually require the services of a professional evaluator.

Q *How do I find someone to help research my program?*

The graduate schools of colleges and universities are excellent sources of evaluation talent. Many

Tips for Preparing To Conduct an Evaluation

It's easy to feel like only an expert can conduct research or set up and carry out an evaluation plan. While it is true that researchers and trained evaluators are best able to set up and carry out significant research projects, program managers can—and frequently do—set up internal program evaluations that help them determine how well their program is achieving its goals.

In order to get ready to evaluate your program you will need:

1. A reason. You should know up front why you are evaluating your program. Are you doing it to satisfy a requirement of your funding source? Do you want to find out which parts of your program are most effective and efficient in order to make programming decisions? Do you want to show your community that your work is having an impact? Identifying clear goals and a set of questions you want to answer will help you focus your evaluation efforts. If your time and expertise is limited, keep your goals simple and your questions to a minimum.

2. A completed logic model that provides a dynamic "road map" for both your program's operations and for tracking and measuring outcomes. The logic model will gather together some of the key elements needed for effective evaluation, including:

- Information about what your services and activities actually are and how they are delivered. This is especially important if one of your goals is to do a process evaluation to determine if your program is actually providing the services it planned to provide. It's hard to know why your program was successful (or unsuccessful) if you don't know exactly what you are providing.

- Written and measurable program outcomes. If you have not reviewed your written outcomes since your grant was turned in, now is the time. If you have made program changes or added new components that you want to evaluate, be sure that you have established outcomes for these. Similarly, if you have outcomes that you really don't think are relevant or measurable, you can modify your logic model (check with your program officer before making any significant changes to your original plan, however).

- Specific measures for the outcomes you have established. All your outcomes should have specific measures to determine if they have been achieved, and tools or systems must be in place to gather and track the information you need.

3. A basic understanding of research and evaluation principles. Numerous useful manuals, workbooks, and other kinds of guides on how to conduct your own evaluation are available; many of these are listed at the end of this supplement. These resources provide detailed help that will make your evaluation easier to set up and carry out. If your program can contract with an evaluation consultant, borrow an evaluator from a partner agency, or find a volunteer with evaluation experience, so much the better.

4. Resources (time, equipment and supplies, and a budget). You will need to know how much time you and other staff have available to do the work required to plan and implement an evaluation of your program. Even if you can't afford to hire an outside evaluator, you will have costs associated with the evaluation, such as computer upgrades or software, printing, and administrative support. (See page 7 for more discussion of evaluation costs.)

graduate students conduct evaluations of educational and youth development programs as part of their thesis work. Departments of education, child psychology, social work, and health are all likely to have students who might be available to design and implement your evaluation or interpret data you've already collected. Graduate students are likely to cost far less than hiring a professional evaluator.

If a graduate student is not available, programs can always turn to a professional evaluator. The costs for hiring professional evaluators can fluctuate, so some shopping around may be required to find one that fits your budget and data needs. The sidebar below offers links to online directories of evaluation professionals. The Resources section of this training supplement offers further resources that can help you identify and work effectively with an evaluator.

Online Resources for Finding a Program Evaluator

What Works Clearinghouse—Registry of Outcome Evaluators

http://www.whatworks.ed.gov/technicalassistance/EvlSearch.asp

American Evaluation Association—Find an Evaluator Database

http://www.eval.org/find_an_evaluator/evaluator_search.asp

Western Michigan University's Directory of Evaluators

http://ec.wmich.edu/evaldir/index.html

Resources for Conducting Research and Evaluation

■ From the MRC Lending Library

OSDFS mentoring grantees can borrow items directly from the collection by using the username "grantee" and the password "success" or by calling Library Associate Kay Logan at 503-275-0135. Further guidelines for using the library can be found online at:

http://www.edmentoring.org/lending_library.html

What's Working: Tools for Evaluating Your Mentoring Program. (2001). This resource offers tools for conducting and scoring mentor and mentee surveys, focus groups, and interviews. It also offers advice on planning an evaluation and interpreting and acting on results to increase program effectiveness.

http://www.nwrel.org/resource/singleresource.asp?id=14034&DB=res

Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach. (1996). This comprehensive guidebook, originally written for United Way programs, offers many evaluation strategies and tools that could be adapted by mentoring programs. It is especially helpful for helping users determine appropriate outcomes to measure and develop specific instruments and data collection systems related to those outcomes.

http://www.nwrel.org/resource/singleresource.asp?id=10270&DB=res

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook. (1998). This excellent resource covers the spectrum of evaluation: determining which outcomes to measure, setting an evaluation budget, locating and hiring a professional evaluator, interpreting and reporting results to stakeholders, and everything in between. It is especially helpful in helping programs create a logic model illustrating how their services lead to outcomes, a critical step for any evaluation hoping to demonstrate scientifically valid results.

http://www.nwrel.org/resource/singleresource.asp?id=14328&DB=res

(Also available for download online at: http://www.wkkf.org)

Understanding Evaluation: The Way to Better Prevention Programs. (1993). This guidebook focuses on programming that attempts to reduce alcohol and substance abuse, but the overview of evaluation methods and instruments will be valuable for any type of prevention program. It also features examples of data collection instruments that programs could adapt.

http://www.nwrel.org/resource/singleresource.asp?id=12393&DB=res

Measuring the Difference Volunteers Make: A Guide to Outcome Evaluation for Volunteer Program Managers. (1997). This guide offers a nice overview of how to conduct an outcome evaluation. It covers pre-evaluation planning, data collection methods, and techniques for analyzing data. It also offers great tips for converting evaluation findings into outcome statements that can promote your success to clients and other stakeholders.

http://www.nwrel.org/resource/singleresource.asp?id=13330&DB=res

Knowing You've Made a Difference: Strengthening Campus-Based Mentoring Programs Through Evaluation and Research. (1990). This guidebook, designed specifically for mentoring programs, focuses on how evaluation can lead to increased participant satisfaction, improved outcomes, and positive program changes. It features a few sample data collection instruments and an excellent set of questions that mentoring programs may choose to try and answer through their evaluations.

http://www.nwrel.org/resource/singleresource.asp?id=15928&DB=res

■ Online Resources

Evaluating Your Program: A Beginner's Self-Evaluation Workbook for Mentoring Programs. (Published by Information Technology International, 2000). This excellent resource offers a comprehensive guide for planning and conducting a local evaluation. Designed specifically for mentoring programs serving at-risk youth, it provides many useful tips and sample data collection tools.

- The full guidebook is available at: http://www.itiincorporated.com/_includes/pdf/SEW-Full.pdf

- Appendix D: Standardized Instruments. This section of the workbook lists existing standardized evaluation instruments that programs can use to measure their impact on things like depression, alcohol and drug use, relationships with adults and peers, perceptions of self-esteem and self-worth, attitudes about school and learning, and a whole host of other youth-related outcomes. For each instrument details about its administration and availability are provided.

  The appendix can be downloaded separately at: http://www.itiincorporated.com/_includes/pdf/17-Append_D.pdf

Measuring the Quality of Mentor Youth Relationships: A Tool for Mentoring Programs. (Published by the National Mentoring Center, 2001). Provides a simple youth survey which can help identify matches that need additional support and give programs a deeper understanding of the overall quality of the matches they are making. Blank surveys and scoring instructions are provided.

The full guidebook is available at: http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/packeight.pdf

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Resources. The Kellogg Foundation offers a number of resources for evaluating all types of nonprofit and youth-serving organizations. The following and other free downloadable publications that might interest OSDFS mentoring grantees are available at: http://www.wkkf.org

- Evaluation Toolkit
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook
- Logic Model Development Guide

Online Evaluation Resource Library. This comprehensive online resource features sample evaluation plans, a searchable database of data collection instruments, and even examples of evaluation reports that illustrate how findings can be presented to stakeholders.

- Main site: http://oerl.sri.com/home.html
- Searchable database of instruments: http://oerl.sri.com/search/instrSearch.jsp

Planning & Evaluation Resource Center. This Web site is an excellent starting point for youth workers who are new to evaluation. It features several tutorials and a collection of links to many other evaluation tools, including blank logic models, sample surveys, and other data sources where researchers can find comparison data.

http://www.evaluationtools.org

Outcome-Based Evaluation: A Training Toolkit for Programs of Faith. (Published by FASTEN, 2004). While originally developed for faith-based programs, this guidebook offers a great overview of evaluation basics and some solid strategies that could benefit OSDFS grantees. The full guidebook is available at:

http://www.fastennetwork.org/Uploads/2F3325EC-7630-425B-8EDF-847AAA69BE76.pdf

Learning from Logic Models in Out-of-School Time (published by the Harvard Family Research Project, 2000). This handy little primer offers a nice overview of logic models and how their concepts apply to youth work and afterschool settings. It also includes a blank worksheet for developing a logic model.

The full article is available at:
http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/content/projects/afterschool/resources/learning_logic_models.pdf

Guidelines for Data Collection Methods (published by Social Policy Research Associates). These materials offer simple guidelines for conducting several types of research that will be common to mentoring programs, especially those conducting in-house evaluations:

- Guidelines for Focus Groups
  http://www.evaluationtools.org/files/Guidelines%20for%20Focus%20Groups.pdf
- Guidelines for Interviews
  http://www.evaluationtools.org/files/Guidelines%20for%20Interview.pdf
- Guidelines for Observations
  http://www.evaluationtools.org/files/Guidelines%20for%20Observations.pdf
- Guidelines for Survey Development
  http://www.evaluationtools.org/files/Guidelines%20for%20Writing%20Survey%20Questions.pdf

User's Guide to Evaluation for National Service Programs. (Published by Project Star). This online guide was originally designed for Corporation for National and Community Service projects, but has wide applicability to any youth-related programming.

The full guide is available in individual chapters here: http://nationalserviceresources.org/resoures/online_pubs/perf_meas/usersguide.php

The Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation (published by Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). This online guide offers another framework for understanding and conducting program research and evaluation. It features particularly useful advice around planning for an evaluation and working with an external evaluator.

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/other_resrch/pm_guide_eval/reports/pmguide/pmguide_toc.html